



To: New Westminster City Council
in Regular Council

Meeting Date: November 17, 2025

From: Blair Fryer, Director, Community
Services

Report No.: 2025-333

**Re: Response to Council Motion: “Conducting a Review of the City's
Community and Neighbourhood Consultation and Notification Processes”**

Staff Recommendation

THAT the proposed next steps to enhance construction notification processes, as described in the report titled “Response to Council Motion: Conducting a Review of the City’s Community and Neighbourhood Consultation and Notification Processes,” dated November 17, 2025, from the Director, Community Services, be endorsed.

Purpose

To respond to the Council resolution that was passed on May 5, 2025, staff are reporting back on a review of the City’s consultation and notification process, with a focus on potential enhancements related to the implementation / construction phase.

Summary

City staff acknowledge the critical role of meaningful public engagement and transparent and timely communication in keeping residents and businesses informed and engaged throughout the life cycle of major infrastructure projects. This report outlines the City’s current practices for engaging and notifying the public about significant projects, with a focus on the implementation phase, and summarizes the work completed by an independent consultant to develop a framework for mitigating community impacts associated with construction activities.

The consultant’s review, which began in late 2024, has examined the City’s existing processes, identified gaps and opportunities for improvement, and provided recommendations to strengthen coordination, communication, and consistency across departments. Findings from neighbouring municipalities indicate that most employ communication tactics similar to New Westminster’s; however, several opportunities for enhancement were identified, including clearer notification timelines, improved coordination with internal teams, and dedicated resources for managing public impact communications throughout the entire life cycle of a project.

The report also highlights potential financial implications related to implementing these recommendations, including the consideration of a dedicated position to oversee public impact and communication functions for major infrastructure projects.

Background

At the May 5, 2025, Regular Council meeting, the following resolution was passed:

1. *THAT the City conduct a review regarding the City's current consultation and public notification process to ensure it currently meets or exceeds recognized best practices for cities of a similar size; and*
2. *THAT staff explore the option to establish an enhanced public notification and consultation process for infrastructure projects and initiatives which are deemed by Council as 'signature' or materially 'significant'.*

The City recognizes that meaningful public engagement and clear communication are essential to ensuring residents and businesses are well-informed and able to contribute feedback on major infrastructure projects. While construction projects inevitably create some disruption, enhanced processes and communication strategies can help community members feel prepared and supported throughout the process.

For the purposes of this report, staff have interpreted the terms "signature" and "materially significant" to refer to mid- to large-sized construction projects that have the potential of creating notable public impacts.

Current Practices

Public Engagement

Public engagement for City projects, including those that involve major construction, follows the City's [Public Engagement Policy](#). This policy outlines consistent standards across departments to ensure engagement is delivered in a coordinated, accessible and transparent way. For most City projects, engagement takes place early, typically at the planning or design stage, where there is the most opportunity for community input into a project. Once a project reaches the implementation phase, however, there is often no scope for further influence, and the focus shifts toward proactive communication to keep residents and businesses informed of progress and potential impacts during the course of construction.

Project teams work with Public Engagement staff to identify when and how engagement should occur, using an internal *Needs Assessment Worksheet* to assess the potential impacts of each project and help determine the appropriate level of engagement. A critical element of engagement planning is to identify what elements of a project are still flexible and can be adjusted based on community input. Staff work to identify these elements within a range of project parameters that are often already fixed, such as prior Council direction, existing City strategies and policies, available budget, technical and regulatory requirements, etc.

Throughout the engagement process, communication about the project needs to remain a priority, including information about the background and rationale for the project. Project teams maintain online engagement pages on Be Heard New West with current information, engagement opportunities, and “What We Heard” engagement summary reports. As projects move into construction, updates such as timelines and traffic impacts are provided on the Projects on the Go section of the City’s website to keep residents informed. A significant challenge is the time gap between when strategic or multi-year plans and policies are established and the timing of implementation. Over this period, the original policy discussions and direction may no longer be top of mind, and the connection to the current construction activity may not be immediately apparent or recalled.

Communications

The Corporate Communications division works with project leads in departments such as Engineering, Parks and Recreation, and the Electric Utility to provide advice and strategic communication planning for mid to large-sized construction projects. Communication staff also provide assistance reviewing content and materials, as well as assisting with the creation and production of items such as signage, newsletter notices, and social media content.

Depending on the size and complexity of a project, a range of communication tactics may be undertaken to ensure residents, businesses, and organizations are informed of upcoming implementation activities and potential impacts. Typical implementation notification materials and channels may include:

- **Construction notification letters** – mailed or hand-delivered to directly impacted residents and businesses. The notification area is defined by the project team and typically includes the homes and businesses within the construction footprint. Typically this would encompass properties within a block or two of the construction project, depending on the scale of impact (e.g., full road closure or access restriction vs. localized parking disruption).
- **Project emails** – sent to interest holders and impacted agencies (e.g. Business Improvement Associations, Residents’ Associations, the School District, TransLink, Coast Mountain Bus Company, etc.)
- **Project webpage** – a *Projects on the Go* page on the City’s public website to provide detailed project information and updates, and links to previous engagement work.
- **Roadworks and Construction Project listing** – updates posted on the City’s webpage, including details on the interactive construction map.
- **Citypage e-newsletter notices** – used to share information about road closures, significant project impacts, and general project updates with a broad community audience.
- **On-site project signage** – highlighting project improvements, anticipated completion dates, project value, contributions from funding partners, visuals (photos or renderings), and a website link for more information.

- **Social media posts** – providing timely updates on road closures, project impacts, and progress milestones, while directing the public to additional resources for more detailed information.

Good Neighbour Protocol

The City's Good Neighbour Protocol (see Attachment 1) is a guiding document that outlines what measures project teams should follow in order to be "good neighbours" and minimize the construction impacts on the community. The Good Neighbour Protocol addresses seven key principles:

1. Communicating with affected neighbours
2. Obtaining all required permits and approvals prior to starting work
3. Respecting existing residential, commercial, and public spaces
4. Respecting construction hours of work, noise, vibration, and light intrusion regulations
5. Respecting the environment
6. Not blocking driveways, and keeping sidewalks, streets, and lanes accessible except where City approval has been granted
7. Keeping the site, roadways, and adjacent sidewalks safe for workers and the public at all times

These guidelines apply to both City-led projects and third-party contractors and developers.

Analysis

The City of New Westminster has experienced a growing number of construction-related impacts from a variety of projects, including City-led initiatives, private development projects, Metro Vancouver, provincial Ministry of Transportation and Transit works, and other third-party infrastructure projects. The overlap of these projects has, at times, compounded disruptions, extending both the duration and severity of impacts for residents, businesses, and visitors.

In 2024, the Engineering department engaged consultants with the C&E Group to evaluate existing gaps and identify ways to improve processes for mitigating community impacts and improving public notification. The consultants utilized a combination of staff workshops, post-workshop analyses, and a document and website scan to better understand the City's current processes and identify gaps and opportunities for improvement.

Drawing on extensive experience in stakeholder relations and collaboration on construction projects with municipalities, Metro Vancouver, and private developers, the consultants developed a draft Construction Impact Mitigation Framework. The draft framework outlines improved processes across all stages of project planning, strengthening coordination between City staff and construction teams to support more effective project delivery and communication.

The C&E Group's draft report identified that staff face significant challenges managing the processes and workload associated with mitigating construction impacts due to the high volume of capital projects being undertaken not only by the City but by third parties as well, compounded by the compact urban environment in which projects are delivered. Communications staff often receive last-minute requests to produce project information materials for the community, or in some cases, no requests are made at all. When adequate notification is not provided, residents may be caught off guard by the start of construction activities, leading to increased calls and complaints and requiring additional staff time to respond to and resolve issues. Another challenge is that often construction notices get lost or disregarded as a result of the high volume of correspondence that some property owners say they receive.

The proposed draft framework would address many of these issues by identifying public impacts and related communication requirements as an equally important component of construction projects, similar to the required traffic management, environmental, and safety plans.

Key Findings

Key preliminary findings from the draft C&E Group report outline current gaps in the process leading to implementation, and suggests potential mitigation activities that would enhance notification and communication at the implementation stage. Findings include:

Traffic Management

Clear traffic management plans and expectations should be communicated with residents and businesses as part of the notification process, with plenty of notice.

Public Impact

While the City's Good Neighbour Protocol provides overarching guidelines, it does not have firm, enforceable requirements that fully address the range of potential impacts, required mitigation measures, or clear expectations for providing information and advanced notification.

Additional analysis should be requested from project owners during the early stages of project planning to identify project-specific impacts. It is recommended that construction teams be required to submit a Public Impact Mitigation Plan for mid- to large-scale projects, developed in collaboration with communication and engagement staff, to ensure comprehensive and coordinated approaches to community impact management. This plan would clearly outline how project owners would meet the Good Neighbour Protocol guidelines, and lead to more proactive planning for providing information and advanced notification.

Communications

As part of early construction planning, it is critical to identify potential impacts so that appropriate communication measures can be developed in partnership with Corporate Communications staff to keep the community well-informed.

Communication requirements should be established in advance, including clear timelines for project owners to submit approved information and messaging to the

Communications team. Roles and responsibilities must also be clearly defined to distinguish the obligations of the construction team or project manager from those of Communications staff.

When Communications staff are not engaged early in a project, there is a risk that required materials may not be developed, or that materials produced may be incomplete, unclear, overly technical, or inconsistent with the City's branding guidelines. Improved communications planning can also help to address the gap between project engagement and construction initiation.

Findings from other communities

To better understand how the City of New Westminster's consultation and public notification processes compare to cities of a similar size, the City reached out to several neighbouring jurisdictions to research their consultation and communication approach for medium to large-scale construction projects. Feedback from those who responded indicated that most municipalities employ tactics similar to New Westminster's; however, several notable strategies were identified.

The City of Port Coquitlam recently updated its construction notification strategy to indicate specific timelines for issuing notifications (e.g., resident notification issued at 90% design phase; follow-up notification at tender award; contractor notification five days prior to construction.)

Port Coquitlam also distributes construction notice door hangers that includes high-level project information. Additionally, their new website includes a *Notices* section, separate from general news, to share brief updates on construction, maintenance activities, and weather-related advisories. The City of New Westminster has already considered including a similar section as part of its new website design.

The City of Coquitlam's website features NotifyMe®, a proprietary tool that allows the community to sign up to receive basic updates on various projects and initiatives. Updates are generated by the project leads and sent out as new project information is available.

Metro Vancouver's Community Engagement Division uses social media, email distribution lists, mailed or hand-delivered notices, face-to-face door knocking, as well as other communication tools such as door hangers, fact sheets, construction and project signage, and project pages on their website. Major projects also have Community Liaisons who regularly visit construction areas and meet with residents and businesses to address issues and ensure contractors are upholding their commitments to the public.

Opportunities for enhancement

As outlined in the C&E Group's draft report, several recommendations have been identified for the City's consideration:

- Incorporate public impact requirements into construction and tender packages, including a requirement for construction teams to submit a detailed Public Impact Mitigation Plan as part of their pre-construction submittals.
- Review and update the Good Neighbour Protocol to clarify its role in outlining comprehensive public impact and communication requirements within construction and tender documentation.
- Explore options to assign or establish a dedicated role responsible for overseeing the Public Impact and Communications workstream to ensure consistent coordination, implementation, and accountability across large-scale projects.
- Review and clarify roles and responsibilities of various City teams involved in a project.

The creation of a construction communication checklist has also been suggested to provide City project owners with a clear list of required and recommended communication tactics for construction projects. This document would help ensure that project owners across all departments notify and inform the community in a consistent and coordinated manner. It would provide clear timelines for important communication milestones, such as a project update letter issued months in advance of implementation that includes a summary of engagement activities and feedback received, an overview of the project plan, and what improvements or changes will take place. This additional communication would help remind residents of earlier engagement work and draw a connection to the upcoming construction work.

Additional opportunities include integrating new features into the City's upcoming website redesign project, developing a standardized construction notification door hanger template for staff use, using the monitors (notice screens) in City facilities to share information about key construction projects, and enhancing post-construction communications to inform the public when projects are complete and to celebrate their successful delivery.

Financial Implications

If the City proceeds with implementing the recommendations outlined in the C&E Group's draft report, one financial implication would be the addition of a dedicated position responsible for reviewing the public impacts associated with mid- and large-scale projects and developing necessary communication materials.

This role would be embedded in Engineering to improve internal communication, coordination, and awareness of upcoming and active projects, while also working to improve coordination and communication with parties external to the City. The position would help bridge the gap between originating policy and Council direction to construction; it would work to ensure timely, high-quality, and consistent delivery of public information and notifications for significant construction initiatives. The position would also help proactively address community concerns and issues that may arise during project implementation.

Funding for communication and engagement activities should be identified and treated as a required component of every construction budget. Allocating appropriate resources

for public communication and engagement is not only essential for keeping residents and businesses informed, but also represents a key element of effective asset management and demonstrates the City's commitment to delivering projects transparently with community awareness and support throughout all stages of construction.

Staff expect that dedicated staff support for enhanced communication and notification processes can be included in existing capital budgets.

Next Steps

Staff are exploring multiple opportunities to enhance construction notification processes, including integrating new features into the City website redesign project. This could include a website section for construction notices, to which residents could potentially subscribe to and receive email notifications on key projects. Staff will also pursue the development of new materials, such as project update letters, for distribution well in advance of upcoming construction, and door hangers.

In addition, Engineering staff are currently in the process of identifying a pilot project through which to apply a more strategic and comprehensive plan for enhancing communications and notification processes. Specific priorities will include:

- Requiring the project owner/proponent to prepare a Public Impact Mitigation Plan as part of their submittals prior to construction.
- Develop and implement a construction communication checklist outlining key communication milestones, including elements that will remind the public about the project rationale and any public engagement processes that informed design and construction.
- Reviewing how requirements for Traffic Management and Public Impact Mitigation plans should relate to each other in construction and tender packages.
- Reviewing and confirming the roles and responsibilities of City teams for each project.

Staff are also looking to fund construction communication work, including potential staffing needs, through capital project budgets.

Interdepartmental Liaison

Corporate Communications staff have worked closely with Engineering and Public Engagement to develop this report.

Attachment

Attachment 1 Good Neighbour Protocol

Report Approval

Submitted By

This report was prepared by:

Ashleigh Young, Manager of Communications

Agreed By

Mike Anderson, Manager of Transportation

Zaria Alibhai, Supervisor, Public Engagement

Jennifer Miller, Deputy Director, Community Services

Kathryn Holm, Deputy Director, Engineering Services

Lisa Leblanc, Director of Engineering and Deputy CAO

Approved By

Blair Fryer, Director of Community Services

Lisa Spitale, Chief Administrative Officer